

STAT

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
3 September 1985SENATOR SPEAKS OUT AGAINST SOVIET "SLAVE LABOR"
BY BARBARA GOLDBERG
NEW YORK

STAT

Those cute little Russian wooden dolls that neatly tuck one inside the other are part of a \$180 million annual business of Soviet exploitation of 'slave labor,' Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, D-NY, charges.

'On a day when we celebrate the dignity of people's labor ... the obscenity of slave labor is on display in our very midst,' D'Amato said Monday at a midtown news conference.

He said he called the Labor Day news conference to point out the sale of such American products -- what he called packaged 'products of misery' from Soviet labor camps -- are a violation U.S. law.

He displayed brightly painted wooden figurines and chess pieces, saying they were crafted by prisoners in desolate labor camps who were forced to gather lumber and carve products.

'We are talking about people whose only crime is practicing their religion, speaking their native tongue or trying to emigrate,' he said. 'If they don't meet their quotas, they are not fed.'

He estimated there are 10,000 such Soviet prisoners at work today.

Selling such goods in the United States violates the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which prohibits products made in a foreign country by forced or indentured labor from entering U.S. ports, D'Amato said.

He blamed the Central Intelligence Agency for not telling Customs Service agents which goods Soviet prisoners were forced to produce.

'It is time the agency stopped generating conflicting signals on what is and is not manufactured by slave labor. Let's give customs the evidence they need to enforce the law,' D'Amato said.

Besides wooden carvings, Soviet prisoners have been forced to produce agricultural machinery and glassware, he said.

'Everytime an American buys (those goods), we are forging another link in the chain that holds Soviet slave laborers in place,' D'Amato said.

Two former Soviet prisoners stood at D'Amato's side as he made the charges. They later recalled the gulags where they were forced to make goods such as those sold in many American stores.

'Ninety percent of the time you're thinking of one thing -- food, food, food,' said Vladimir Dremlyuga, now of Jersey City, N.J., who served six years for demonstrating against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

He said he was fed every other day, and served only a bowl of soup and some bread.